

City of Fort Pierce

Florida



Office of the Mayor and City Commission

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August 17, 2015

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

I write regarding the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) proposed rule designed to reform and modernize the Universal Service Fund's Lifeline program, published on July 17, 2015. Specifically, I am concerned with several aspects of this regulatory scheme that I believe will adversely affect qualified low-income individuals and households, and further broaden the digital divide.

To be clear, I strongly support the FCC's efforts to reform and update Lifeline services. As you well know, Lifeline is critically important to our most economically disadvantaged constituents. For more than three decades, this program has ensured that those most in need maintain access to telecommunication services so they may search for jobs, access healthcare, and connect with family. I remain steadfast in my commitment to meeting the needs of low-income Americans and the FCC's work to modernize the Lifeline program to comport with 21st century demands.

At the same time, while I fully support extending the Lifeline program to include broadband service to eligible recipients, I do not believe this service should come at the expense of traditional phone services. I am concerned that the proposals in the FCC's rule will force subscribers to choose whether to spend their monthly benefit on either cell phone service or broadband. Moreover, the monthly subsidy is insufficient to support the level of broadband service required to solve any real communications issues, as well as to purchase a bundle of both broadband and voice.

I also fear that establishing a voucher program will prohibit Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs) from efficiently and effectively reaching qualified individuals and households, limiting their access to this much needed program. Finally, delegating eligibility determinations to a government entity other than the FCC will force unnecessary burdens upon carriers and will likely cause delays in service.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter and sincerely hope that you will take these concerns into account as you move forward in the rulemaking process. I look forward to working together to improve this vital program to ensure that it better serves the needs of underserved communities across the nation.

Sincerely,

Reginald B. Sessions
Commissioner